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Alberta

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

A Child's Hope

Connecting ordinary people with
an extraordinary opportunity.

Government
of Alberta

A Child's Hope

Become Part of *A Child's Hope*

A Child's Hope connects ordinary people with an extraordinary opportunity.

Transform a Child's Life

In your neighbourhood, there are children who need your help. We believe that healthy, safe children make healthy, safe communities and we all have a role to play in ensuring the future vitality of our communities. When we come together to support our children, we give hope to the next generation of doctors, mechanics, lawyers, hairstylists, and parents.

Become a Part of *A Child's Hope*

Share your home by providing temporary or permanent care for a child or youth in need. Hundreds of children in Alberta need foster, kinship, and adoptive families.

Give your time and volunteer with an organization that serves children in need.

Spread the news and become an ambassador for Alberta's children in need. Help us rally support by talking to your family and friends or by inviting us to make a presentation to your church or community group.

This guide provides you with the important information you need to decide **how** you can become a part of *A Child's Hope*.

> "Fostering. It's a different kind of world and a different kind of life. It is the kind of life that has taught all of us how to love the ones we never knew we could."

Children and Youth Looking For Hope

All children and youth deserve a home that is nurturing and safe.

There are children and youth in Alberta of all ages, from newborns to teenagers, and from all different backgrounds, who are in need of such a home. Every child's story is different. Some are in need of temporary care, including foster and kinship care, while others are in need of a permanent home through adoption or private guardianship.

Children and youth come with all sorts of unique, special needs. Some are born with addictions to drugs or suffered prenatal exposure to alcohol. Others have been abused or neglected. Some need a home that can support and follow the traditions of their cultural background. All our children need the structure and love a nurturing, supportive adult or family can give.

It is rare that a child in need doesn't have a brother or sister. For this reason, *A Child's Hope* is always looking for families who can welcome a group of siblings into their home.

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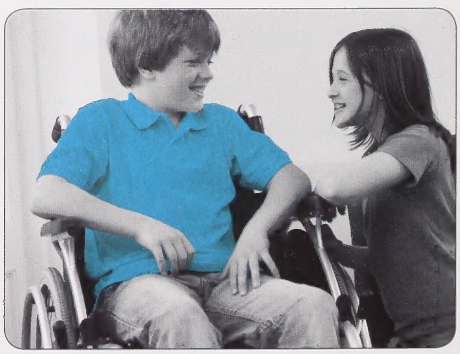


Did You Know?

Approximately 9,000 children are in government care in Alberta. Everyday, children need a safe, nurturing foster, kinship, or adoptive family.

Want to know more about the type of children and youth that need hope? Here are some of their stories.

Kevin's story
Kevin was in junior high school when he was placed in foster care with the Spencers. With a new structure and routine established in his life, he found somewhere he could thrive and receive the positive feedback that he needed to set and achieve his goals for the future. He excelled in school, specifically in math, and joined his older brother and sister every weekend to play soccer on a community league team. They would even join him and the rest of the Spencers to go camping each summer.

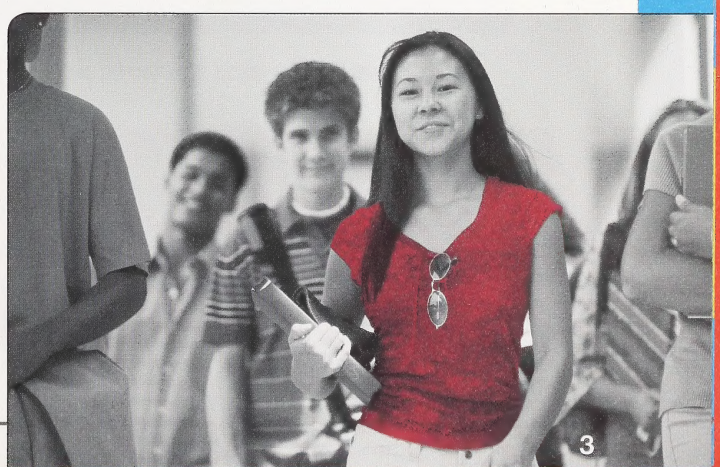
Robert's story
The words polite, cooperative, and determined describe Robert. At the age of five, he was adopted by Jennifer, who gave him the extra attention he needed. His stubborn nature made it difficult for him to share toys, but her patience and positive feedback worked to make him accountable for his behaviour from a young age. He is now excelling in Grade 2 and spends weekends participating in different activities like swimming lessons, his friends' birthday parties, and karate.

***A Child's Hope's* Future**
The children and youth who find hope have very bright futures. Here are some stories from recent high school graduates. The common thread between these young adults is they have all been a part of *A Child's Hope*, and are now pursuing positive and bright futures.

- Carrie plans to attend MacEwan College on the way to becoming a police officer. She enjoys physical fitness and recently took the physical challenge that police officers need to take for admission into the academy. She finished in third place overall and took the top female position. She also enjoys spending time with her sister and her young nieces and nephews.

- Theresa is an exceptional young woman who, with her bright smile, has overcome being a "kid in care" and a fire that destroyed all her personal belongings. She is a very resilient youth who has persevered and worked hard for everything she has. She intends on doing the nursing internship at the Glenrose Hospital, with plans for applying to the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta.

- Brandon is a post-secondary student studying cultural anthropology and archaeology at Red Deer College. He is a former foster child who has extensive knowledge and experience with the child intervention system. He has chosen to dedicate his time and energy to improving the lives of countless Alberta children by sitting as a member on the Children and Youth Services Youth Advisory Panel.



The Families With Hope To Give

We believe a family environment is best for raising children. *A Child's Hope* is looking for families who can provide both short-term and long-term care for a child in need.

Great families come in all shapes and sizes. Single or in a partnership, gay or straight, whatever your nationality, all stable families have a few things in common: they have good communication skills, demonstrate patience, and can establish consistent guidelines and expectations. The most important thing you can offer a child in need is a caring and supportive home to help them grow and prosper.

Depending on how you take part in *A Child's Hope*, there are a few things you should know. You can be any age as long as you are 18 or older. You don't need to be rich, but need a stable income. You should not have experienced a major illness or trauma in the last year. If you have a partner or spouse, you should have been living together for at least a year.

> "Now when I'm asked 'Why do you choose to foster' my reply is 'We did not choose to foster, fostering chose us'."

You will need to establish good working relationships with a variety of people, including the child's worker, biological family, school staff, physician and other caring individuals who support the child's well-being. Additionally, you will also need to take the required training.

Whether you are a foster, kinship or adoptive family, and regardless of whether it is for a long or short period of time, introducing a new family member or members will affect everyone in your household. You need to consider what effect the new family members will have on your current relationships, including on your partner and on your own children.

There are many other ways you can be part of *A Child's Hope*. The rest of this guide will describe these options in detail to help you make a decision that's right for you.

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Did You Know?

The Alberta government will cover all the administrative costs of adopting children who are in their permanent care.

How Can You Give *A Child Hope?*

There are many ways to show a child you care.

Temporary Care

Kinship Care Families: Kinship care families have a pre-existing relationship with a child or sibling group. You may be the child's grandparent, neighbour, or someone else with a significant relationship to the child. When you become a kinship family, you preserve that child's link to their family, culture, and community, while ensuring their safety and well-being.

If you know a child or youth in the care of the province, you may be eligible to become their kinship family.

Full-time Foster Families: Full-time foster families provide full-time care for foster children. Foster care is meant to be a temporary arrangement with the goal of returning the child to his or her extended or biological family once they are able to provide a safe, nurturing home again.

Part-time (or Respite) Foster Families: Part-time or respite foster families open their home on a short-term basis to foster children when their foster parents have an event in their life that temporarily interrupts their capacity to foster (e.g. illness).

Permanent Care

Foster-to-Adopt: Foster-to-adopt families care for children in the same way as a foster parent, providing a safe home and supporting the child's return to parental care when possible. Because of the extra special attention to matching a specific child to a foster-to-adopt family, there is a willingness to make a long-term commitment and adopt their foster child if returning to his or her biological parent is not an option.

Private Guardianship: Private guardianship, or becoming a legal guardian, means that a child or youth is placed permanently in your care. A biological parent may still retain rights as a guardian and make some decisions affecting them under certain conditions. An application for private guardianship can be made after the child or youth has been with the same caregiver for six months or longer.

Adoption: When a child or youth comes under the permanent care of the province, they may be available for adoption. An adopted child has all the rights and entitlements of any biological child and adoptive parents have all the rights and responsibilities of a biological parent. Currently, there are hundreds of children in Alberta waiting for their "forever" home. When you open your heart and your home and adopt a child, you give a child hope for the future.

Share Your Time

One of the most powerful ways you can contribute to *A Child's Hope* is by volunteering your time. There are many organizations in Alberta that can connect you to a child or youth who needs your help. This is a great opportunity to have a positive and lasting impact on a child or youth as a volunteer or mentor.

Research shows that mentored youth show improved:

- Educational attitudes, such as fewer unexcused absences
- Health behaviours (less drug and alcohol abuse)
- Social behaviours (including more positive relationships with parents and friends)

Having a mentor can open a door to life experiences that some children may not otherwise have a chance to experience. *A Child's Hope* recognizes the importance of mentorship and encourages you to get involved through a mentorship program such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

To find an organization where you can volunteer your time to be *A Child's Hope*, visit the Big Brothers, Big Sisters website at **www.sharealittlemagic.ca** and click on 'Alberta'. Or, go to the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families website at **www.aascf.com** and click on 'Agency Resources' and then 'Directory of Services/Organizations'.

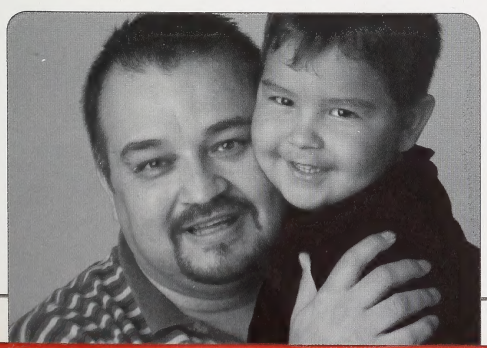
Be an Ambassador

There are many ways you can help a child in need, even if you aren't able to open your home and provide short-term care for a child.

Children from **every corner of the province** need Albertans to know they are looking for hope. Even within Alberta's most affluent neighbourhoods, there are children who need you.

We are asking you to join the movement of *A Child's Hope* by talking about this important issue and these wonderful opportunities with your friends, family, and community.

If you are part of a community or faith-based organization, we ask you to let us make a presentation to your group. We value any opportunity to raise awareness about the types of children who need homes, and share some success stories from *A Child's Hope*.



> "We chose to foster because we love kids; we do it because we want to make a difference in the life of a child."

Did You Know?

Single people can adopt. In some cases, a single applicant is considered the best choice for a child being matched for adoption.

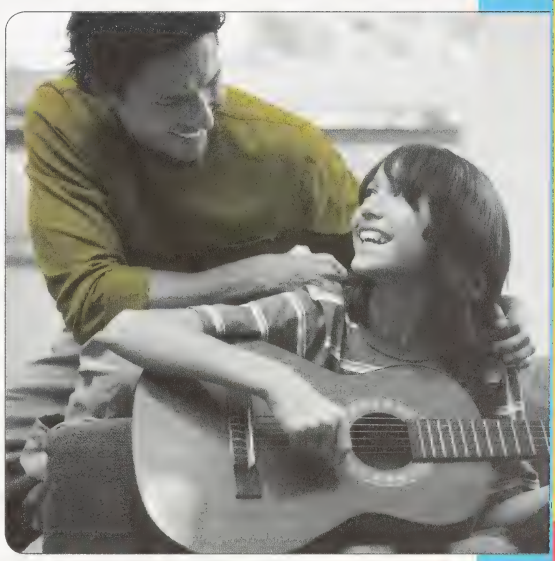
The Supports We Provide to Our Families

Training

A strong support system and broad skill set are key elements of any successful foster, kinship, or adoptive family. Having a strong network of friends, relatives, and community nearby will help in your new role as a caring and nurturing parent.

A big part of your support system is ensuring you have the skills required to successfully care for your new family member or members. To help, you will receive caregiver training that consists of eight, three-hour sessions covering:

- Child development
- Understanding the special needs of children in care
- Duties and responsibilities
- Available supports



Financial

The Government of Alberta also provides financial support to help you take care of a child or youth in need:

- **Basic Maintenance**: helps foster and kinship families cover the cost for food, clothing, shelter, general household costs, and other basic expenses. This daily rate is based on the age of the child.
- **Medical Coverage**: is provided for each foster and kinship child.
- **Skill Fees**: compensates foster parents for their level of training and expertise in caring for a child. This rate is based on the classification of the foster home (Level 1 or 2). All first-time foster homes are classified as Level 1. With increased levels of training and demonstrated skills, you can become a Level 2 foster home and qualify for a higher daily skill fee rate.

Financial Support for Adoptive Parents (Supports for Permanency Program):
A financial support program is also available to parents who adopt or take private guardianship of a child previously in permanent government care. This financial support helps parents provide care for the special needs of their new child or sibling group (e.g. counselling, physical, speech or other therapy, etc.).

Support Workers

Support a child in his or her placement by planning for the child, identifying community resources, assisting caregivers, providing support and more.

Other Supports

A Child's Hope opens a door to a whole new community.

You will have the opportunity to build relationships and have support from other foster, kinship or adoptive parents. Becoming a foster, kinship, or adoptive parent should never be a lonely experience! You can also access ongoing training, counselling, legal advocacy, relief support, recognition events, and monthly group support meetings.

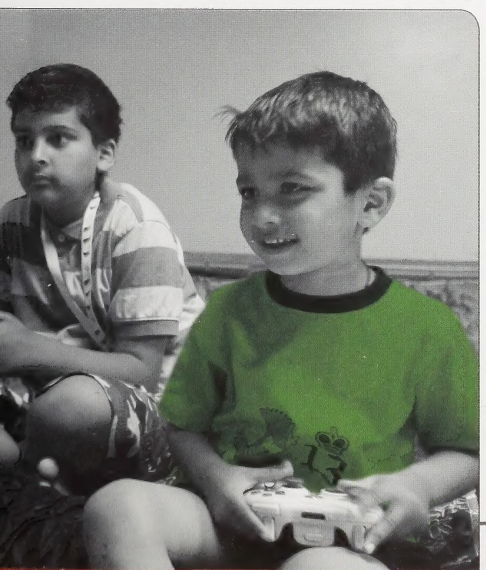
> "I think of our own biological children and what a difference fostering has made to them. The compassion and understanding they display never ceases to amaze me. They are both phenomenal little girls who have willingly opened their hearts and home to other children. They share their parents, their bedrooms, their toys, and their love so selflessly."

How do you become a foster, kinship, or adoptive family?

There are several steps to take before you can provide temporary care or a permanent home for a child or sibling group. Here are the basic steps to becoming a foster, kinship, or adoptive parent/family:

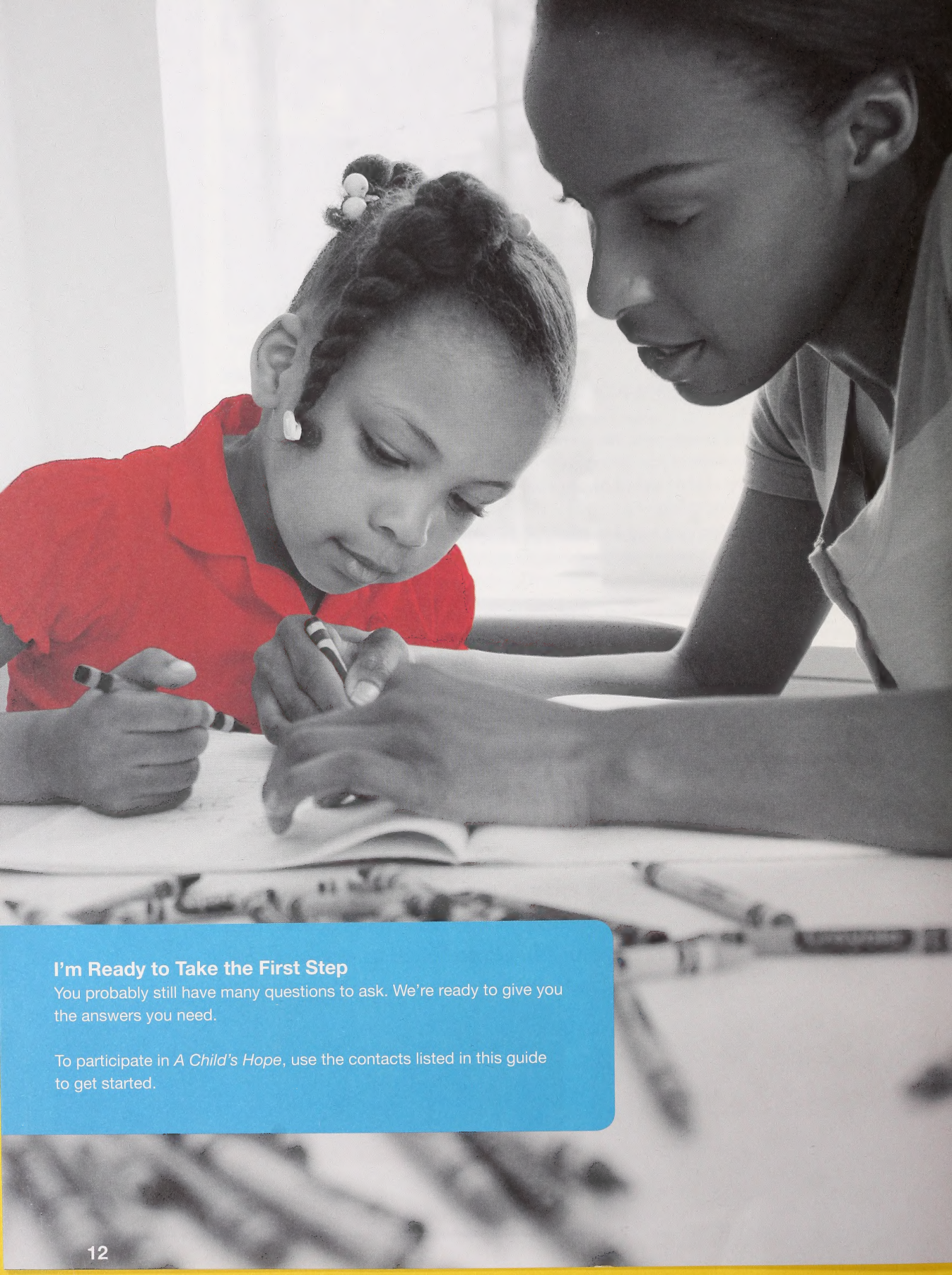
1) Fill out an application form. Use the contacts listed in this guide to find out where you can pick-up a form.
2) Submit three personal references, a medical reference, criminal record/child intervention checks.
3) Participate in a home assessment. Working with a home assessment writer, this process is a comprehensive review of your history, your relationships and your home. It helps us understand what kind of child should be placed in your home and ensures you are ready for a new child or sibling group.
4) Attend and complete the Orientation to Caregiver training, an information course that prepares you to care for a child with unique needs. You do not begin training until your application has been accepted.
5) Prepare for a placement. You will meet other professionals involved in the placement and care process and the child's case worker. Whenever possible, placement involves an introduction and integration of the child or sibling group into your family.
6) In the case of adoption, and based on the success of the placement, arrangements are made to finalize the adoption in court.

Use the contacts listed in this guide to get answers to your questions.



Did You Know?

You don't have to own your home or earn a high income to give a child hope. You must be able to show that you have enough room and income to accommodate a child or sibling group and be willing to take the necessary training to enhance your parenting skills.



I'm Ready to Take the First Step

You probably still have many questions to ask. We're ready to give you the answers you need.

To participate in *A Child's Hope*, use the contacts listed in this guide to get started.

A Child's Hope

www.achildshope.alberta.ca

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